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Lost in Austin

Thomas W. Leonhardt

St. Edward's University, leonhard@libr.stedwards.edu

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Leaving the Books Behind

by **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (University of South Carolina, School of Library and Information Science, Columbia, SC) <MMassey@gwm.sc.edu>

Dr. Feili Tu, my professor at USC in Research, recently told me about a book she felt I must read. The reference was to **Sherry Turkle's *The Second Self***, published in 1984 by **Simon and Schuster**. I was unsure why this particular recommendation had been made to me until I curled up with the book after the final class and papers were completed. This text examines the culture "of and created by" the advent of the computer. **Dr. Turkle** actually looks at how the computer has influenced our lives and changed our psyches forever.

Machines have always influenced our lives, giving us more leisure time to do things of pleasure or waste. I don't remember ever reading a book about how people react to a "thinking" machine and how it enhances or changes the way you think, act and emot on a daily basis. She calls the computer a "catalyst of culture formation." We are combining and recombining into groups of intense interests. We seek answers to problems and seek new ways of dealing with information, people, and processes. It has been a rebirth of the sixties, an intense intellectual examination era. Our new horizons soar to thoughts of "knowledge cooperatives" instead of "food cooperatives." We now think of computers as not only a means to an end, but a mind expanding way to visualize life and all of its retinue of difficulties.


I often wondered why I never fit into any particular group or discipline. Recently, I have understood that my mind flits about the world like a butterfly looking for a tidbit of information here and a bit of data there and sampling the world's crops of knowledge. Slowly, my mind pieces together those bits of information into reasonable streams of sensible answers for specific problems. Not only do I find the current difficulties solvable, but there are insinuations for further exploration along those lines. The computer loosens the barriers of my thoughts and allows it to explore so many problems and solutions and eventually conjoins even the strays of my ideas tossed in the air. I feel emancipated...free to think and feel and believe again.

About six years ago, I had a small stroke. All I could do was sit there and feel ineptitude ooze across my mind like a veil of darkness. I could no longer read English and understand it. The page was a series of printed symbols which no longer held meaning. At first I panicked, then lapsed into immediate depression, then became pensive about where we go from here. I was able to obtain a computer through the generosity of a merchant and began a systematic rehabilitation based on the computer, its thought patterns and its games. I was fool, therapist and patient in one, but I made very rapid improvement and began to read again. I had this kind of internal understanding, but expression of those thoughts took longer to achieve. Three years later, I was able to make my way hesitantly into

Graduate School. I was eager to learn. I could finally understand my passion for information research and my ability to translate that knowledge to the general public. I have a gift that I would not have understood without my daily conversations with the computer. The "thinking machine" provides me with an ability to examine all the situations around me, re-associate their meanings and parameters and come to some very original ideas that can help our library and perhaps those of the future.

The computer allows us to find our strengths and correct our weaknesses. It allows us the ability to explore all ideas, even those that seem strange or off-the-wall. It supports our adventures even when people around us do not. I remember buying my first computer. Well, actually, my husband bought it because he had a fascination for mechanical devices. I found it an immediate intrusion on my life, a competitor for my husband's attentions. I stroked it everyday but kept my distance. One day, I sat down, turned it on, and began a communion that has intensified each day of my life. Sometimes I believe it is the machine which puts life in my fingers. Perhaps, it is because I have been a person reliant upon touching and feeling the words and sounds of life, that this computer has enhanced that ability to once again communicate my unbound thoughts. Poetry flows with a power that impresses. Fiction seems to run from my fingertips with each touch of the keys. And now, I am able to conjure process changes for work and develop lists of routine instructions that actually make sense.

I cannot even begin to think about my library work without the computer. Yes, I remember the "good 'ole days" of card catalogs, manual typewriters, scrapers, electric erasers, embossers, pens, pencils, rulers, and even the first days of photocopiers. I remember the labor inten-

sive days which never allowed the freedom to spend time wondering about call number construction and subject headings, or the variety of serials problems. We would not have had the opportunity to set up electronic preprint libraries, worry about vendors and publishers from our technical services perspective, or even track the changes in the field. The computer has indeed matched us up in a charismatic and fruitful combination of needs and services that will carry us to the **Charleston Conference** and other meetings throughout the years to seek advice and share information. Yes, our "information cooperative" is unique and wonderful and services millions each day. For as much as I observe people utilizing the computer as a mindless machine doing the business of the day, I see our group observing, gathering information, and currying the favor of the "mindful coordination of parts and thoughts" for the higher purposes of resolve and culture manipulation. We have important and unique tasks to complete and do so with the teamwork of the best software and hardware possible in this new age of knowledge expansion. We will work hard to see that it continues in this manner. 

*We have now formed our **Writer's Group** and these very gifted students will be filling the **ATG** with words garnered from their courses and thoughts. This is a chance for you to become familiar with your new prospective colleagues and introduce yourself to them in November. In the months to follow you will be reading articles from **Nancy Loggins, Adrienne Fallaw, Abigail Rush, Allison Thiem, Peggy Cwiakala, Stephanie A. Kobezak, and Melissa Earley**. We hope that this will be an informative and entertaining process for everyone. — MM*

Lost in Austin

by **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <leonhard@libr.stedwards.edu>

On April 17, 2004, I released another book at another airport. My first release was on March 15, 2004 at the **Will Rogers World Airport** and the book was *The Poorhouse Fair* by **John Updike**.

The second book, released on April 17 was *Self-Consciousness: Memoir*, also by **John Updike**. I left it at Gate 23 at 10:30 a.m. at the **Austin-Bergstrom International Airport**.

Why **Updike**? I didn't start out to make a statement about him but already have, but before I talk more about **Updike**, I should satisfy your curiosity and explain what I do when I release a book.

The first thing is to select a book, probably

a paperback that I have read and perhaps re-read and appreciated the book enough to want to share it. Next I go to www.bookcrossing.com where I register the book and watch with pleasure as a photograph of the very book in my hand appears on the screen. One day I am going to register one that is out of print and without an ISBN to see what happens.

After I register the book, I download (**Adobe**) a copy of the bookmark/release statement. In marked spaces, I write the book crossing identification number BCID and my name and the date of registration. This form is pasted inside the front cover of the book. In Oklahoma

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City I put a Post-It Note on the front saying "Free," but on the Austin book, I inserted an extra release form as a book mark.

Once a book is released, I go back to the web site and give details about the release including the terminal and gate number. This part of the process is surprisingly detailed and fun to complete.

A few years back, when I was living in Klamath Falls, Oregon, I was blessed with a wonderful used book store run by **Aaron Ashurst**. He has a wonderful selection and seems to add desirable new stock every week. I would buy something every time I visited **Aaron**, not just to help keep him in business but to add to my stock of inexpensive books that I wanted to read one day and books that I had read twenty to forty years ago and wanted to re-visit. They were mainly paperback books that I intended to pass on to my children when I had finished with them. I would now have to pay more to mail the books

back to Oregon than they cost in the first place. Happily, I have found another way to share some of my favorite books.

I have been releasing **Updike** titles simply because I am re-reading him at the moment. He was important to me when I was in the Army. The first thing I read by him was *Rabbit, Run* (finished May 7, 1963) I don't remember how I discovered it, probably at the **Ft. Dix Library** or perhaps it was lent me by one of the soldiers from New York City, there for their **National Guard** six month's of active duty. On June 24, I finished *The Centaur* (my favorite **Updike** book), and *The Poorhouse Fair* on August 16 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

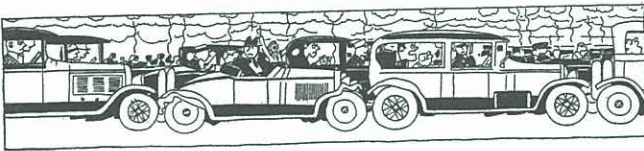
I never resented the Six-monthers. They were mostly college graduates with good jobs in the city, so why would they want to wait and get drafted or volunteer when they could fulfill their military obligation a bus ride to where they lived. Instead of resenting them, I admired them and learned from them and some guy bunking near me who had been drafted but couldn't even finish radio school before faking insanity and getting kicked out of the Army. He just might have been crazy, as in *Catch-22*, but he had read more than I had, at least of the modern authors and it was he who introduced me to **Saul**

Bellow, J. D. Salinger, and Philip Roth. According to **Noel**, *The Adventures of Augie March* was the great American novel.

Edward Albee was quite the rage in New York City at the time so I read most of his plays including *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, thanks to one of the National Guardsmen who actually lent me his hardbound copy.

As I was writing this and reminiscing about 1963, I realized that from 1963 through 1965, as a private first class (PFC) in the Army, I read some of my favorite books and learned to appreciate certain authors who remain good friends even if I never got to meet any of them. I realized, too, that I want to re-read the rest of **Updike** from that era along with **Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, J.D. Salinger**, and one volume by **James Agee**, *The Letters of James Agee to Father Flye*. They are ideal candidates for release into the wild under the **Book Crossing** banner. Yes, once released, **Book Crossing** members consider the books to be "in the wild."

I encourage you to visit the **Book Crossing** Website and decide for yourself if you want to participate. If you do, tell them that I (**Goldenoski**) sent you. I don't remember what I get for recruiting new members but it would be honor enough just to know that people I know are out there releasing good things to read. 🌿



Little Red Herrings — PASCAL

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

PASCAL. It has nothing to do with the famous French philosopher. It has nothing to do with a computer language. But in terms of academic libraries in South Carolina, it may be more important than either.

Surely by now you've heard of it? **Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries** is the brainchild of South Carolina academic librarians; and if the infant survives, it will become the braintrust of South Carolina's public and private academic libraries resource sharing collaborative. For **PASCAL** has to do with technology on the one hand and a philosophy of broad-based library service on the other.

Sharing is, of course, not new to South Carolina academic librarians. We've been sharing for decades now. We have to. It's the nature of library services to do that sort of thing. We borrow from each other because budgets are too tight and needs are so great. Decades ago South Carolina academic librarians began sharing resources. And expertise. And just about anything else you can think of, whether nailed down or not. Two groups, the **Library Directors' Forum** (consisting largely of academic librarians at publicly supported institutions) and the **Library Directors Council** (consisting of members of the **South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities**), worked together for years but asymptotically; always approaching, but never quite reaching, a full-service joint venture. Then something novel occurred.

The two groups got together and made sharing our paramount concern. Academic directors and deans from both the public and private aisles of South Carolina's university and college libraries put their heads together and, like **Athena** from the head of **Zeus, PASCAL** was born. Patterned after such services in other states' Virginia's **VIVA**, Georgia's **Galileo**, Missouri's **MOBIUS** and Kentucky's **KYVL** — **PASCAL** will eventually become South Carolina's statewide consortium. Pressing its three major programs — Consortial Purchasing (via either individual initiatives or under umbrella-like operations such as **DISCUS-Academic**), Universal Borrowing and Digitization — **PASCAL** is rapidly becoming a veritable universe of services and will eventually become the statewide consortia.

Statewide funding is critical in order for **PASCAL** to become as fully viable as statewide consortia in other states. For example, Virginia's **VIVA** recently reported a cost avoidance of 103 million (see: <http://www.viva.lib.va.us/viva/outreach/releases/covits20031002.html>). Indeed, if funding from South Carolina's educational lottery can be secured, South Carolina's academic libraries would see their budget buying power increase 4 to 10 times! It only makes sense. Instead of dozens of South Carolina academic libraries

(potentially 54 in all) buying the same half dozen databases, why not a statewide consortium buy one for all?

By the time you read these words, we'll know if **PASCAL** made it through the budget process. The **Senate Finance Committee** has already approved lottery dollars for **PASCAL**, and we loudly applaud its foresight. Now it moves to the larger legislature. This is a critical time for **PASCAL**. We look to the larger legislature to see this important step for what it is: information access for all. Legislatures in other states have seen the merit of such cooperatives and funded them to the benefit of all their constituencies. Those constituencies have not been disappointed, and neither have their representatives. How could they be with millions in cost-avoidance, access to information statewide and greater learning for all? We know Palmetto legislators know a good thing when they see it. Surely they will agree with us that this is a good thing to do for this great state and its citizens. And doing it from the educational lottery funds only makes sense!

Meanwhile, are academic librarians just waiting around for someone else to act? Heaven's no. In fact, the state's academic li-

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